M. KAPLAN DIARIES – TRANSCRIPTION

1941 APR 25 – 1941 AUG 14

both individual and collective. Before a modern person who has been conditioned against religion by general hearsay can come to have religious experience he must acquire religious literacy. He ought to be made acquainted with some of the broad principles based upon the scientific discoveries concerning the way the various religions of mankind have arisen and developed. It is especially important to emancipate the average Jew from such prepossessions about religion, that it is merely a matter of rites and observances, or that it is confined to supernaturalism or that its main function is to be a sanction for ethics. To have one's understanding of religion limited to the traditional view of it, and to have no knowledge of the outstanding truths revealed by the study of comparative religion is to be religiously illiterate. Hence if Jewish study is to reckon with the vital needs of Jewish life, it should not refrain from informing the layman of the progress that has been achieved within the last century in the understanding of religion.

Friday, April 25, 1941

Under this heading should come the entire problem of what to do eith the biblical criticicsm. Certain it is that ignoring it cannot but lead to an attitude of negativity to religion as a whole. As bad, if not worse is it to recognize it and to deal with it in the artificially apologetic manner of Hertz's commentary on the Torah. The bon mot of Schechter's to the effect that higher criticism was only higher anti-Semitism was timely when he said and even then had limited application. But when repeated at nauseum as a reason for not dealing with the far reaching implications of higher criticism for the understanding of the formative period of Jewish religion, it serves merely as an excuse for evading a frank discussion of the traditional doctrine that the Torah was supernaturally revealed. If we want our

people to make the Torah an integral part of their consciousness we must be outspoken as to whether we regard it as a monolithic text of supernatural origin or as a document of composite authorship. If I am not mistaken the overwhelming majority who sponsor and take the courses in adult Jewish study can not be gotten to subscribe to the traditional doctrine concerning the Torah. If that is the case then we must do two things in teaching Torah, one from the standpoint of Jewish literacy and the other from the standpoint of Jewish experience. From the standpoint of Jewish literacy, we should give in popular form the history of the scientific study of the Bible, its present status and some of the most important conclusions thus far arrived at by the principal schools of biblical research. In this connection it would be quite in place tc indicate the contributions to biblical research made by Jewish scholars, whose theories about the Bible are certainly free of any Christian or anti-Semitic bias. From the standpoint of Jewish experience, we shall have to indicate how such a scientific approach is compatible with the evaluation of the Torah as indispensable to Jewish life, and how such indispensability does not preclude our treating some of its teachings and practices as obsolete. Above all it will be necessary to treat the conception of God in the Torah as by no means the final form in which it must be accepted for all times, but rather as an incentive to such a formulation as would guide us Jews individually and collectively in the living of the good life.

To sum up: If we want that Adult Jewish Study shall avoid the Charybais of boredom and the Scylla of short-lived faddism, it must be made relevant to the problem of overcoming the centrifugal tendencies in Jewish life, those which threaten Jewish solidarity, the Jewish ethics and the Jewish religion. It must neither pontificate nor speak with the kind of authority which treats all alternative views as either non-existent or as unworthy fo consideration, nor must it speak

with the aloofness of encyclopedic scholarship which cares not a hoot whether you take or leave what it has to offer. Jewish adult study must concern itself with Jewish literacy as a means to Jewish experience, with having ever increasing numbers of the Jewish laity identify themselves completely with the problem of Jewish survival and revival, for only then will that problem receive a satisfactory solution (p.71)

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Saturday, April 26, 1941

Last Thursday I participated in the program of the Regional Meeting of the Religious Education Association which took place at the Riverside Church. The general topic discussed was "Can Religion Be Included in Public Education for Democracy?" In the morning I listened to an address by Prof. Elliott President of the Association who had just returned from an extended trip throughout the country to"study with interested groups in various centers the relationships of religion and education." The program schedules his address as his first public report of what religious and educational leaders are thinking. Actually he reported very little of what they were thinking, but rather more of what they were doing. The trouble is that very little "thinking" is being done on the subject. Elliott himself has undoubtedly done considerable thinking, but it is not of sufficiently fundamental a character to be of much help in dealing with the problem of the relation of relgiion to education. I find the same to be true of the other people who participated in the program of the conference, among whom are some very distinguished educators: F. Ernest Johnson, Goodwin Watson, Stewart G. Cole, Hugh Hartshorne, Mrs. Sophia Lyon Fahs and John L. Childs. What strikes me as peculiar is that these people are satisfied to be arguing endlessly about religious education without realizing that there must be some common understanding concerning the nature of religion, its origin, growth and manner of functioning

before it is possible to discuss its place in education. Yet nothing can indicate how far they are from so fundamental an approach to the problem better than the fact that they include in their program the Catholic presentation which is definite, narrow and intransigent because of its insistence that the Catholic Church has a monopoly on religious truth.

My part in the program had to do with the question: "Is it possible to teach dynamic religion in a non-sectarian manner?" I answered the question in the affirmative, with the proviso that it be phrased to read "to teach dynamic religion without resort to the historical religions." In the 15 minute statement which I read I tried to bring together the main lines of my contention that religion is not what the individual does with his solitariness but what the group does with its togetherness. If those interested in the problem had taken the trouble to think this proposition through they would have understood more fully what was involved in this present concern for religion in public education. They would see that it is an attempt on the part of the historical groups to survive the strong competition of American national life. They therefore try to picture public education as godless so long as they have no hold on it. I did not actually state these ideas, because they would have offended virtually all present, who were church people. Instead I followed the alternative tack of making out a case for American religion which should be taught in the schools through the medium of American sancta. I have no idea how the audience reacted to what I said. I was heckled by Hartshorne who wanted to know what would happen to the historical religions, and what provision there was in my plan for thatuniversal religion which transcended national loyalty.

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Tuesday, April 29, 1941

For once I have acted out a dream of mine. The elimination from the Kiddush in the Haggadah of the reference to our being a chosen people has called down upon me the vociferous protestations of the great do-nothings who command positions of spiritual influence in Jewish life but who, having a vested interest in the status quo, confine their activity to protesting against any move to blow off the sacred dust that has collected on the ancient stereotypes. I anticipated the storm which has broken loose and which may develop into a hurricane. But I had to dislodge from the Jewish mentality an idea which was bound to be most obstructive to any growth, reconstruction and progress in Jewish life. The very act of affirming with all the solemn pretense of prayer an idea which is not taken seriously and which in fact is flouted and ridiculed is the greatest offense against elemental decency. That Jews could be so insensitive as to permit themselves such flummery would be evidence either of senility or degeneracy. I could not continue to work for the Jewish cause if it was to be inextricably tied up with such unfeeling disregard for the sanctity of prayer. Thank God I have had the courage to go through with the excision of such a cancerous growth from the Jewish consciousness.

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Wednesday, April 30, 1941

Although I find that I have to make considerable changes in any address or article which I write out in this journal I shall attempt to write out the talk I expect to give at the annual meeting of the Reconstructionist Foundation, because this journal has the effect on me of an interlocuter who draws out from me what I would otherwise have no occasion to say. My subject this time is to be "The Doctrine of the Chosen People."

The most challenging innovation in the New Haggadah and one which may come to have far reaching signifiaance for the future development of Jewish belief was the omission of hardly a dozen words from the traditional text. Those words ~~thank~~ state that God "has chosen us from among all peoples and has exalted us above all tongues," they include also the allusion to God's having made the distinction between Israel and the nations as he does between light and darkness, between the seventh day and the six work days. This innovation was not made lightheartedly or without full realization on the part of the editors that they were abandoning a doctrine which Jews in pre-modern times regarded as no less self-evident than the existence of God. While it is true that in the official creeds of an Albo or a Maimonides the doctrine that Israel is God's chosen people does not even figure, there is no disputing the fact that by implication and inference it is present in those creeds. It was to be expected therefore that the om ission of the statement affirming this doctrine would raise a storm of protest and criticism, even in quarters where one is wont to meet considerable latitudinariansm.

That the teaching concerning Israel's election should be called into question, not by secularists but by those who stress religion as the soul of the Jewish civilization, and that they should indicate their refusal to subscribe to that teaching by deliberately omitting it from the liturgy which they otherwise accept, has so taken the critics off their feet that they have not been able to look into the possible reasons for so radical a step. The only motive they could think of as having actuated the editors was the wish to appease our enemies who point to this doctrine of Israel as the chosen people as an evidence of the contempt which the Jews harbor for the rest of the world. One such critic naively asks how the editors could possibly hope to succeed in appeasing our enemies on that score so long as there

are enough copies left of the old Haggadah.

It should therefore be stated forthwith that no such considerations moved the editors. The notion of appeasing hostile critics of Judaism was furthest from their minds. The assumption that Judaism is responsible for having given rise to the idea of race superiority which is today creating havoc in the world is only another of those absurd accusations which it is hopeless to attempt to refute, because they stem more from prejudice than from a careful weighing of facts.

To any one free from prejudice it should be apparent that the doctrine of Israel's election belongs to an entirely different universe of discourse from that of the modern theory of race superiority. The former is religions teaching; the latter is political policy. At its narrowest no religion would refuse admission to anyone who recognized its truth and accepts its obligations. Even though Judah Hallevi came suspiciously near ascribing to the Jews a definite superiority based on racial descent, and emphasized the denial of absolute equality to a proselyte, the very act of soliciting the Chazar King and his people to adopt Judaism implied in the entire argument of the Kuzari, indicates that we cannot take his theory of Jewish racial superiority too seriously.

As for making the Jews responsible for the Germanic adoption of the theory of race superiority, the actual source whence that theory was taken over by the Germans is well known. About 75 years ago the French writer Count Gobineau wrote an Essay on the Inequality of Human Races in which he tried to prove that the Nordic race was gifted with such extraordinary qualities of thought and action that it was entitled to be the master race of the world. Wagner who translated into poetry and music the new theme of German superiority, was an intense hater of everything Jewish and could scarcely have been influenced by anything coming from that source. The germanic notion of

race superiority belongs rather to the class of ideas found in the childhood stage of mankind everywhere, when peoples naturally tended to be ethno-centric, when the correlative of inner solidarity of any group was always hostility to the out-group. All nature peoples, from the most primitive to the most highly civilized regard themselves as the only genuine species of human beings. The answer which the Caribs give to the question whence they came is "We alone are the people." Laps and Esquimaux think of themselves alone in belonging to the category man. The Greeks and Romans regarded themselves as inherently wualified to be freemen, while the rest of the world were barbarians and only fit to be slaves. In their case we already have a definite anticipation of a political interpretation of race superiority. These examples suffice to prove that nothing could be more ridiculous than to hold the Jews responsible for a trait which is so inherent as to be universal.

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Thursday, May 1, 1941

It is entirely from the standpoint of religion and for the purpse of having our religion as sanction only for what we sincerely believe to be ethically acceptable that we should appraise the doctrine of Israel's election. I conceive religion not merely as a matter of conforming to an established regimen of ritual practice. I therefore do not view the question of Israel's election as a question whether or not we should recite a certain formula. It is a question whether we can get ourselves with our present outlook on life to believe the fact which the formula states or to pray for the desideratum which the formula implies. Before we so proceed any further with the discussion of the matter, we must make sure that we get the full force of the distinction between viewing the question as one of ritual or as one of experience. The trouble with most of our discussions of religious

problems is that they turn upon the propriety or impropriety of reciting certain formulas or perfoming certain acts. They seldm, if ever, probe to fundamental problems of our personal experience. The first step, therefore we must take in orienting ourselves to the problem of Israel's election is to realize that our main concern is not whether in the light of the fact that the Jewish people has throughout the ages regarded itself as divinely chosen, we have or have not the right to tamper with that belief. Our main concern should be whether there is any sense in which we actually believe that as we are now constituted, we can conscientiously affirm that we stand in any closer relationship to God than any other people. What we have to decide is not whether we should or should not quote what our ancestors believed about themselves. When we worship our religion must not be merely a quotation but a genuine personal experience. If we apply the criterion of personal experience to the traditional doctrine of Israel's election we can come to but one conclusion, viz. that we cannot thank God for having exalted us above all tongues without stultifying ourselves religiously.

The reasoning by which we arrive at this conclusion is very simple. Throughout the past it did not occur to any one, Jew or Gentile, to doubt the historicty of the miraculous events recorded in the Torah concerning the Patriarchs and their descendants in Egypt. But by far the most significant of those events was the one of God's self revelation to Israel on Mount Sinai and the divine announcement of at least two of the Ten Commandments. To question the truth of these events was regarded as far less reasonable than to question what one perceived with his senses when he was wide awake. With not even a scintilla of doubt concerning the historic actuality of the supernatural events which took place entirely for the sake of Israel how could anyone in his right mind regard Israel as other than the

chosen of God. No other people was privileged to have deserved in the least that God should make the slightest change in the normal course of events for its sake. Never did God appoint any one from among them as a prophet to make known his message to them. For him to reveal himself to them was absolutely inconceivable. So long as our fathers held to these beliefs how could they possibly regard themselves, who were the descendants of those to whom all these self-manifestations of God took place, other than the most privileged of all peoples. It should not at all surprise us that the belief in Israel's election was formerly as pervasive as an atmosphere, pervading everything that had to do with the religion of the Jew. What the Jew really thanked for when he pronounced the benediction over the fact that he belonged to a God-chosen people, a people superior to all other nations was that God had performed all those miracles for his forefathers and had revealed himself to them and given them a Torah. Insofar as the Jew believed in the literal truth of all these events they constituted for him actual experience. He lived them over again in his imagination every time he came across any reference to them. For that reason Jews had a perfect right to regard themselves as being more closely related to God than any other people.

Those conditions no longer obtain with the majority of modern minded men and women. They cannot possibly consider the miraculous events as recorded in the Torah and in the rest of the Bible as historic. The archaeological discoveries to be sure have confirmed the historic character of the manner and customs which form the background of the ancient saga but they never will confirm the actual saga themselves. We shall never have the means of knowing whether the patriarchs were historic persons who actually figured in events such as are described in the Torah. No evidence of their having recieved such divine communications as indicate that they were the beloved

of God and singled out for divine favor can ever be forthcoming. The likelihood therefore that the patriarchal stories will ever be regarded as historic is out of the question. How then can the modern minded Jew accept literally the argument developed by the Deuteronomist with regard to ~~his~~ God's selection of Israel, when he says: "The Lord did not set his love ~~from~~ upon you, nor choose you because you were more in number than any other people, for ye were the fewest of all peoples but because the Lord loved you and because he would keep the oath which he swore unto your fathers (Deut. 7:7-8)? This does not ~~at~~ at all preclude our reading these texts in the Torah as part of our religious regiment, since one of the main functions of that regimen is to keep alive the remembrance of the past. The past of the Jewish people is not one thatis crowded with stirring military or political events. It is one that is interesting mainly because of the notion-making and character shaping beliefs and saga. We cannot afford to dispense with the remembrance of our andent thought life, however much we may have outgrown it. But when it comes to affirming what we ourselves believe with regard to God's relation to us, we dare not content ourselves with quoting what our ancestors believed. We must express forthrightly what we ourselves believe. With the main foundation for the belief in God's selection of Israel undermined by our present knowledge of the past, it is nothing less than sacrilege to address God with an untruth.

So important is it to make the past inner experiences of our people part of our own consciousness that we often have to resort to the process of interpretation in order that we may understand those experiences in terms of their original setting, historical and psychological. The process of interpretation is intended to acquaint us with as much as possible of the context of life to which belong the values and ideals of our forebears, in order that those values

and ideals shall be rendered so vivid as to be properly understood and appreciated by us. But when we reinterpret those values and ideals we go one step further and seek to equate them with our own actually experienced wants or with such needs as we deem it necessary to cultivate. Thus it is highly essential that we interpret the doctrine of the chosen people, for the very reason that it played so central a part in the consciousness of our forebears. But that doctrine does not lend itself to reinterpretation in that it can not be equated with any value to which we might aspire today. What stands in the way of its reinterpretation will appear in the sequel.

In interpreting the doctrine of the Chosen People we are chiefly interested in discovering what it was in the past that motivated that doctrine. We may well assume that something more than delusion was the source of the belief held by our ancestors that they were God's chosen. They unquestionably wanted to voice their sense of superiority to the other nations. But when we analyze that urge we should try to understand what really led them to regard themselves as superior. Their criterion of value may prove abiding, though we reject their egotism. If we delve into the inner meaning of the entire scriptural context to which the assumption of Israel's election belongs, we find that as far as the Torah is concerned the main point in the reiteration of Israel's election is that the God whom Israel worshipped was so much superior to the gods of the other nations that Israel might well consider itself fortunate in being his people, in having the opportunity to worship him and obey his laws. Being the only true God alongside the gods of the other nations, who were nothing, his law alone is worthy of respect and obedience. From the realization of the superiority of their God and of their law they concluded that only a people with such a God and such a law is a real people.

By virtue of all these facts the Jews regarded themselves as singularly fortunate

Friday, May 2, 1941

i.e. as God's own in a sense that no other people was.

Thus by the process of interpretation we are able to distinguish between fact and fancy in the ancient texts which emphasize Israel's superiority to the other nations. That part of Jewish consciousness which depends upon the remembrance of the past calls for periodic quotation of those ancient texts so that we may not forget the fact element which they contain. The fact is that the Jewish people during the first millenium of its existence somehow did achieve a unique conception of God, a conception which displaced all the others held by the peoples of the occident and the Near East. It is moreover an indisputable fact that the Jews as a people evolved a more rational and humane code of conduct than did all other peoples in ancient times. So long as that fact operated we may without resorting to the traditional saga, claim for Israel the right to have called itself the chosen of God.

The preceding analysis of the sense of superiority implied in the doctrine of the chosen people applies mainly to the first millenium of Jewish history. The analysis of the doctrine of election as held by our ancestors during the Christian centuries reveals that the affirmation of superiority became part of the Jewish people's struggle for existence. With the destruction of the State and the forced dispersion of the Jews among the other nations that struggle became embittered. No less intense than the physical war waged against the Jews was the war of nerves. It consisted then as now of unrelenting defamation. By the time the Christian church was firmly established and its doctrine became fairly crystallized that defamation acquired a definite pattern which was calculated to make

it extremely effective. The pattern consisted in basing the defamation on the very conception of God which the Jews had evolved and on the very scriptures which the Jews themselves regarded as the word of God. The very doctrine of election was used as a weapon against them. Christianity both authoritative and sectarian went far beyond Judaism in the utilization of the doctrine of election. That doctrine became its very raison d'etre. It set itself the task of realigning mankind into the chosen and the damned. Thecriterion was faith in Jesus as the Son of God and identical with God. The objective was the establishment of the Church that was to supersede all human governments. In this process the Jewish people was singled out as the people which having at one time been the elect of God repudiated him and thereby became a people accursed and damned.

In the face of this ruthless attack on its reputation what else was there for the Jewish people to do but so elaborate its traditional claims to superiority as to counter effectively the claims to superiority advanced by the Church? With the interest of modern mankind during the pre-modern Christian centuries focussed on the question of salvation and of eligibility for it, all of its thinking was cast in the mold of the doctrine of divine election. All of creation was regarded as having come into being for the sake of those who were worthy of being God's chosen. The company of the elect by reason of their closer kinship with God wielded a power not vouchsafed to ordinary mortals. Not only did they vanquish death but even in this life they exercised especially in their collective capacity as the divine ecclesia, an influence over the very course of nature. Thus did the doctrine of election to whomever applied, or by whomever used connote two specific ideas, one that of centrism, the other that of mystical or demonic power.

Both of these ideas entered into the conception of the Church. The Church regarded itself as the Israel of the New Covenant and as the heir of the Israel of the old covenant. As such it took over the Israelocentric conception of history and of creation. The whole of creation was pictured as a cosmic drama in which the denouement was enacted by Christ through the medium of the Church. Paul greets "those who are faithful in Jesus Christ" with the words "He chose us in him ere the world was founded, to be consecrated and unblemished in his sight...so richly has God lavished upon us his grace...showing us how it was the purpose of his design so to order it in the fulness of the ages that all things in heaven and earth alike should be gathered up in Christ" (Ephesians I 3-10). The church, moreover, viewed itself as a fellowship with divine gifts to use the technical phrase of Christian theology. The well known phrase of Athanasius "For he (Christ) became man that we might become divine" implies that sacramental presence of God in the Church. The Eastern Church especially where we would expect the nearest approach to the Jewish conception of Israel as it was then shaping itself, is said to have thought of itself "as a mysterious hierurgical saving institution" (Hastings III, 622C). Due to the part played by the mysteries in the early development of Christianity, the mystical power of the church was translated into the complicated regimen of the sacraments. Though the Jewish conception of the ecclesia of Israel did not attain in practice that theurgic character, in theory it might well have done so had the institution of sacrifices been permitted.

Whether in direct response to the challenge of the church, or as a spontaneous reaction to claims which began to be voiced by various religious sects during the first centuries of the Christian era, the Jews likewise advanced the claims of centrism and mystic and demonic power for their own people, which henceforth is designated not only

"umah" or nation, but "kneset" or ecclesia, the exact analogue of church. Throughout rabbinic writings the Israelocentric concep tion of the cosmos and of human history is the theme of numerous aggadic homilies. To select but one of the numerous typical passages which illustrate just in what sense the idea of Israel was taken by the rabbis: "The straw, the stubble and the chaff were disputing with one another. Each one said 'For my sake was the field sown.' Said the wheat 'Wait until you get to the threshing floor; then we shall know for whose sake the field was sown.' When they arrived at the threshing floor and the owner went out to winnow the grain he scattered the chaff in the wind, he took the straw and threw it on the ground, and the stubble he burned. But the wheat he took and piled up into a heap and whoever passed by fondled it with admiration. Likewise do all the nations contend among themselves, each claiming "The world was created for my sake." But Israel retorts ' Wait until the day of reckoning comes. Then we shall know for whom the world was created" (Gen. R. 83;5 and Cant R on 7:3). Likewise was the claim of mystic power made for Israel. According to R. Eliezer ben R. Jose the Galilean, God said to the angel of death "Although I have given the power oever every one of my creatures you can have no power over this nation" (Israel) (Cant R on 8:6). Time and again we come across statements which express the apotheosis of Israel. Israel is a people transfigured and deathless occupying a rank equal to that of angels or holy princes. (Cf. Cant R on 1:2a). This implies that the ecclesia of Israel possesses a supernatural or demonic status.

What is the pragmatic purpose of both of these claims -- centrism and daemorism? The answer is contained in some of the foregoing passages which voice those claims. These claims are intended to furnish the basis for the assumption that only those identified either with the Church, for the Christian, or with the Ecclesia of

of Israel, for the Jew, are eligible to salvation, which for pre-modern man had one outstanding significance - that of being able to vanquish death and enjoy immortal bliss in the hereafter. To be the elect of God therefore meant to be of that society of human beings for whom alone the world was created and who had the exclusive opportunity of the blessed life in the hereafter. The Church claimed these prerogatives by virtue of its constituting the body of which the head was Christ. The Ecclesia of Israel based its claim to these prerogatives by virtue of its possession of the Torah. (The exception in favor of the (p.81) only prove the rule).

It should by this time be clear how little there is in common between the idea of chosen people as promulgated in the Judeo-Christian tradition and the idea of a master race which is arrogantly proclaimed by the Germans. The former is the expression of a claim to exclusive possession of the way of life by which mankind can be saved, the latter is an expression of the will to power. The only excuse for putting them in the same category is that the group which lays claim to being the sole possessor of the key to salvation more often than not exploits that claim for the purpose of achieving power over other groups. Yet it is unfair to hold the doctrine of divine election responsible for the promulgation of the pseudo-scientific doctrine of Nordic race supremacy. The very statement in Deut VII, 7 deprecates the identification of divine election with natural selection.

By a strong concatention of circumstances the doctrine of election of Israel crops out in the most unexpected quarters and in the guize of that very chauvinism which is a form of the will to power, a form which the weakest of peoples often indulge in as a mental compensation for their very weakness. I refer to the fact that Jews who have lost all interest in the inner spiritual life of their people, whose attachment to that people is due mainly to the refusal

of non-Jewish society to accept them completely, very often try to convince themselves that they belong to an inherently superior race, superior especially in being intellectually gifted. Even if true, that fact is merely one of natural or artificial selection to which Jews have been subjected by the process of discrimination. Jews have had to wage a keener struggle for existence than other peoples. Those who survive would naturally possess certain qualities that make for survival, both group and individual. But this superiority is bound to disappear the moment the process of natural selection would relent, and has nothing whatever in common with the doctrine of Israel as the chosen people.

This kind of Jewish chauvinism which some Jews express through the medium of the doctrine of Israel's election is a misconceived effort at reinterpreting that doctrine the process of reinterpretation sets in when a traditional doctrine or value has become irrelevant on account of the change in the context of life and world outlook. To maintain the community with the past some particular aspect in that doctrine or value is sought out which may happen to be not only relevant to the current context of experience but which may also continue to be desirable by reason of its intrinsic worth. Chauvinism is an aspect of the doctrine of election, an aspect which when singled out may be relevant to current experience; but it cannot be regarded by those who realize its meance as by any means desirable. That is sufficient reason for condemning such reinterpretation as invalid, to say nothing of the fact that in transforming a religious value into one of natural selection, the value is multiplied.

The question, however, remains: Why should it not be possible, on the basis of the interpretations of the doctrine yielded us by the analysis of it, to give it a valid reinterpretation, and thus retain it as part of the developing Jewish consciousness? The answer is that no matter what aspect of that doctrine we shall choose to preserve, whether it be the true conception of God, the humane character of the ancient code, the possession of the key to salvation, we cannot possibly eliminate from the doctrine itself the element of comparison with other peoples and the claim to superiority of some kind over them. For that there can be neither factual nor moral justification at the present time.

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Saturday, May 3, 1941

There can be no better proof of how unamenable the doctrine of Israel's election is to reinterpretation than the unacceptable character of the most plausible reinterpretation that could be given to it. Such is the rendering given to that doctrine by Kaufman Kohler, who is probably responsible more than any other Reformist leader of a generation or two ago for its retention in the Hebrew Union ritual. The following is a summary of Kohler's chapter on that subject in his "Jewish Theology," the standard formulation of the Reformist theological position.

To Kohler the election of Israel as set forth in the Bible means that Israel is "the nation whose special task and historic mission it is to be the bearer of the most lofty truths of religion among mankind." He finds this concetpion of the chosen people implied in the message transmitted to Israel through Moses before the proclamation of the Ten Commandments and in the other references to Israel as God's elect in other parts of the Torah, especially Deuteronomy. But for the explicit statement of that conception we are referred to the second

part of Isaiah. According to Kohler, then, the doctrine of Israel's election and the doctrine of Israel's mission are entirely identical.

Kohler then proceeds to point out that the Jewish people is justified in making this claim to being the elect of God, in that it actually has "a certain superiority over other peoples in being especially qualified to be the messenger and champion of religious truth." He does not attempt to deny that in the claim to being God's chosen there is an assertion of superiority. What he does attempt is to prove that there is no presumption in asserting such superiority. In the first place, because it is true -- the Jewish people is really more qualified than other nations to champion religious truth, and secondly, because such sense of superiority carries with it a "grave duty and responsibility." The Jews are not alone in having a divinely appointed mission or historic destiny. The Greeks and the Romans had also been "appointed by divine providence for their special cultural tasks." But they never attained that self-awareness of divine destiny which the Jews did. Secondly, being God's chosen people is a superiority which involves "a grave duty and responsibility." The destiny which accompanies it calls for a willingness to undergo suffering for the good of mankind.

The Jewish people owes its great distinction of having been chosen by God to be his priest people and a light unto the nations "to hereditary virtues and to tendencies of mind and spirit which equip Israel for his calling." Kohler actually enumerates those traits. He finds that "the soul of the Jewish people reveals a peculiar mingling of characteristics, a union of contrasts, which makes it especially fit for its providential mission in history." In other words the Jews as a race possess an unmistakable hereditary genius for religion. This is in keeping with Kohler's basic assumption that "religion and race form an inseparable whole in Judaism."

Though the mere statement of that reinterpretation should suffice to indicate its inept and untenable character, it is necessary when dealing with so deeply rooted a notion as the one of divine election, to articulate the reasons for rejecting what hasd been offered as a workable version of it for our day.

In the first place, that version is based on a misinterpretation of the doctrine of election as developed in the Bible. Any reinterpretation that is based on a wrong interpretation of the teaching, ideal or value in its original setting cannot possibly be valid. In this instance Kohler confuses the doctrine of Israel's election, as expressed in the overwhelming majority of biblical allusions dealing with Israel's relation to God, with the doctrine of Israel's mission which is the subject of less than half a dozen passages in the second part of Isaiah. The fact of Israel's election is stressed for one of two purposes: 1) to remind Israel of its obligation to live up to the special code of laws vouchsafed to it by God, or 2) to assure Israel of God's purpose to save it from its enemies because of His covenant with the Patriarchs. There is not the slightest implication in the multitude of references to Israel as a chosen people that it is expected to fulfil the mission of making God known to the nations. As for the few allusions to Israel's mission, it is difficult to say of two or three of them exactly to whom they refer, whether to the entire people or to the prophet who regards himself as the incarnation of Israel. As for those which refer unmistakably to the people as a whole, the manner in which the mission is to be discharged has very little in common with what we usually associate with missionary activity. The light which Israel is to be unto the nations is pictured by the Prophet as radiating from Israel's brilliant career as a nation in its own land dispensing justice and maintaining peace in the name of its God. The establishment of the ideal kingdom of God in the

land of Israel is what the prophet hoped would lead the rulers of the world and their nations to acknowledge God. Nothing could be further from the truth than Kohler's reading into the statement of R. Eleazar ben Pedath concerning Israel's state of exile that such exile constituted a fulfilment of the prophetic concetpion of Israel's mission. (Incidentally K. substitutes the phrase "God sent Israel among the heathen nations" for the original which reads "God exiled Israel among the nations.")

Secondly, Kohler's reinterpretstion of the doctrine of Israel's election is based on a series of unproved generalizations concerning certain traits as characteristic only of the Jews, and on biological assumptions concerning heredity which are entirely unwarranted. It is one thing for an ancient sage to express his love for his people by describing them as being unique in the possession of the traits of chastity, benevolence and humaneness. But it is quite another thing for a modern person seriously to assert that because the Jews have these inherent hereditary traits they alone are qualified to grasp and promulgate the truth of religion. We expect of the modern person a greater regard for objective facts than is evidenced in such wild generalizations. But what is worse is that if Jews were to adopt such a reinterpretation of the doctrine of election they would by implication give their assent to the most pernicious theory which has taken possession of a large part of mankind in our day, the theory of racial heredity which is being advanced to justify racial inequality and the dominance of the master race. Historical conditions as well as geographic environment and social institutions are greater determinants of personal traits than heredity. Moreover to represent divine election merely as confirming naturally inherited traits is to identify it virtually with natural selection. It is but one step from usch identification to the identification of God with the process by which

the physically weak are weeded out. We know all too well from current experience how such a conception of God is only another name for the apotheosis of the will to power.

Thirdly, Kohler's version of Israel as the chosen people, a version which was elaborated by most of the Jewish theologians of the nineteenth century in Central Europe, including Nachman Krochmal, is on the whole a Jewish replica of the Hegelian philosophy of history. Whereas Hegel makes the course of thistory point to the Prussian State as the culmination of the development of the spirit in human life, the Jewish theologians apply his method of interpreting history to prove that such culmination was attained by Israel. By now that such method of viewing history has been sufficiently discredited to require any elaborate proof that it is invalid for the purpose of objective truth. Hegel himself formulated it as a reinterpretation that the Christian philosophy of history, which like the Jewish had been based on the assumption that one people or church had the exclusive possession of the key to salvation. Being a reinterpretation of a doctrine which affirmed a distinction between superior and inferior, Hegelian philosophy of history was bound to name one people as superior to the rest of mankind. By that fact alone it condemned itself as unacceptable to those who refuse to see in the difference of superior and inferior anything else than a matter of chance and not a matter of divine willing. Differences as such more uniqueness might be conceived as willed by God, but not the predetermined and permanent superiority of one part of mankind over another.

Finally, the very assumption of a predetermined and permanent superiority, no matter in what respect, does not lend itself to reinterpretation. Our purpose in reinterpreting traditional values is to retain and emphasize those elements in them which are compatible with our own highest ethical standards. Among these ethical standards to

which any traditional value must needs conform, if it is to continue functioning in our own lives, is the one of democracy. I refer, of course, not merely to the institutionalized political forms of democracy, but to that conception of human worth and individual dignity which regards any classification of human beings into superior and inferior as a sin against the holy spirit. This does not mean that we must shut eyes to the fact that human beings are unequal in their gifts and attainments. What it means is that we should not assume a priori that any particular race, group or people is endowed by nature or by God with any gift which entitles it to regard itself, ipso facto, as superior. By no kind of dialectics is it possible to remove the odium of compariosn from any reinterpretation of an idea which makes invidious distinctions between one people and another. It certainly ill comports with our dread of segregation from the life of the nations of which we Jews are citizens, and with our passionate eagerness to be identified with them culturally and spiritually to thank God that he has separated us from the other nations as he has separated light from darkness.

* * *

Thursday, May 8, 1941

We cannot discuss Kohler's reinterpretation of the doctrine of the chosen people without asking ourselves the question: Since Kohler no longer believed in the historicty of the patriarchal stories, the miracles and of the Sinaitic theophany, why was he at such pains to reinterpret a doctrine the traditional basis of which he no longer accepted? The same question applies to a number of scholars identified in our day with historical or conservative Judaism. They too have broken with the traditional or orthodox belief in "Torah min hashamayim". The fact that they do not accept Wellhausenls or Kuhnen's theories of higher criticism does not mean that they accept the traditional view

of the authorship of the Pentateuch. Even if they were to subscribe to the Mosaic authorship of every word in the Torah-- which they certainly do not -- they would still be read out of Judaism, from the traditional point of view, insofar as they admit a human element in the composition of the Torah and do not regard it as literally dictated by God. It is not likely that the reason for their insistence upon retaining the doctrine of Israel's election is that the doctrine pervades the whole of ancient Judaism like an atmosphere, and that its elimination would deprive Judaism of something as essential to it as air is to the human being. The same might be said of the traditional doctrine of the divine authorship of the Torah. There is not a single syllable or letter of the Jewish tradition that is not thoroughly permeated with the spirit fostered by the assumption that the whole of the Pentateuch was dictated by God to Moses. Yet these very men who have long emancipated themselves from that assumption would resent anyone reading them out of Judaism on that account. What then prompts them to work themselves up to such fanatic zeal against any tampering with the doctrine of Israel's election?

The only reasonable motive to which such zeal can be ascribed, and this applies as well to the position taken by Kohler and the Reformist school generally, is not one which derives from the momentum of tradition but from the considerations of Jewish survival. They seem to be convinced that as soon as Jews would cease to believe that they are endowed whether individually or as a group, whether biologically or culturally with some moral or spiritual preeminence over the rest of the world, they would give up their struggle to exist as a people. The docttrine of Israel's election, in its traditional or its reinterpreted sense, emphasizes such preeminence and therefore cannot be eliminated without weakening Israel's will to live. My reply to this

is as follows: The hope of bolstering up the Jewish will to live by means of reasons or assumptions which fail to come up to the highest standards of truth or goodness which has thus far been attained by the most ethically minded of the human race not only refutes and subverts the claim to moral and spiritual preeminence, but is even unbecoming from the standpoint of Jewish self-respect. It is futile to expect that the Jewish will to live would be bolstered up for long by spurious means. Any claim to moral ar spiritual superiority or preeminence of any kind, no matter how much responsibility or suffering it may involve, that is not based in incontrovertible proof, either supernatural or natural is spurios and unworthy even of ordinary morals, to say nothing of high spiritual attainment. Having assumed, as premoderns both Jews and Gentiles did the historicity of the events recorded in the Pentateuch they could not but regard superiority of Israel to other nations in the divine scheme of creation as an integral part of one's very outlook on life. The only difference between the Jews and the Gentiles was that the fomer claimed the had never forfeited that superiority while the latter claimed that such superiority had passed over to them. Christendom and Islam both operated and still operate with the doctrine of election which they took over from the Jews.

But in the modern world a higher ethical concept arose with the birth of democracy. That concpet is based on the worth of the individual human soul, a worth that is independent of the people, race or church to which one belongs. This implies that no people, race or church as such confers upon its members any higher status as a human being than does any other. It is the purpose of democracy to treat as equals in as many respects as possible individuals who are so different from one another as to render the classification of superior and inferior entirely unwarranted by fact. All the more so does it

aim to have us treat as equals peoples, races and churches, which when compared with one another in their entirety can hardly make out a case for differences which would warrant any one of them to consider itself superior to all the rest.

Among the conventional lies current these days is the one that the historical religions have contributed that conception of individual human worth which is the keystone of democracy. Here and there one may find a stray statement or epigram in the historical religions which has a bearing on the high worth of the individual. But it is like a coment coming out of infinite space only to return thither without becoming part of our own universe. The mere fact that belonging to a particular people or church rendered one more eligible to salvation than those who happened to be outsiders meant that a human being counted more by reason of the group he belonged to than by virtue of his being human. This is the very antithesis of the democratic assumption that the ultimate unit of human values was the individual human being. Further evidence that the historic religions had little to do with emphasizing the worth of the individual is that they had nothing to do with the recognition of the principle of (?p. 87 bottom)

The purpose in calling attention to this contribution of democracy is to point out that democracy represents a definite ethical advance on the historical religions, whether they be Jewish, Christian or Mohammedan. Prsent apologetics to the contrary notwithstanding, the historical religions have become somewhat democratic of late, thanks to their realizing that they have more chance of surviving if democracy will triumph rather than totalitarianism. Whatever democratic tendencies they may have begun to display within the last century or two are due to the same social and economic factors that contributed to the spread of enlightenment and the progress of political democracy before the outbreak of the first world war. Accordingly the survival of the

Jewish religion calls for the removal from it whatever is in direct conflict with the ethical implications of true democracy. The assumption that the Jewish people is superior to other peoples is, as has been shown, in conflict with a true understanding of democracy and therefore cannot be retained without creating conflict in the mind of the Jew.

Continuity of the Jewish consciousness demands that as large a number as possible of traditional Jewish values be retained. This does not mean however that all traditional values must necessarily be retained. Some are inherently of such a character as not to be capable of reinterpretation, i.e. of being fitted into the pattern of the present day outlook on life. Those values may serve as a peg to hang our collective memory on, but they can offer no guidance for the future. They may be repeated in the liturgy as a quotation, but they may not be used to express what we should like to see fulfilled. Not even the fact that they suffuse the entire tradition, and that their elimination must produce a radically altered tradition should be sufficient to save them. Take e.g. such traditional values as those which constitute the plexus of Temple and sacrificial worship, or as those which go to make up the entire system of ideas associated with the notion that Jews who live outside Palestine must regard themselves as in exile and must look forward to being restored to Palestine. Both these sets of values are so fundamental and pervasive that one who regards Judaism as in no way subject to the conditions and spirit of the times, would be all too likely to read out of Judaism anyone who ventured to disregard them. Yet life is stronger than theory and the Jewish will to live seems to have managed to get along without those two sets of values, viz. the sacrificial cult and the notion of exile with its collollary of a personal Messiah to redeem Israel from that exile. Why then should the Jewish will to live be weakened through the elimination

of another of those ancient doctrines which runs counter to the movement of the human spirit at its best?

Friday, May 9, 1941

Far from being a factor for Jewish survival the doctrine of Israel's election is ideologically henceforth bound to be the greatest hindrance to it. For this and for no other reason do I deem it necessary to have the affirmation of it expunged from our prayers of thanksgiving. In its traditional form that doctrine belongs to the same universe of discourse as the one in which God was conceived as a magnified human being sitting on a great throne in the heavens, surrounded by hosts of angels and demons who are at his beck and call, ready to carry out his will on earth. It belongs to the universe of discourse in which the supernatural miracles believed to have taken place in the past were a guarantee of supernatural miracles which will take place in the future, and one in which the divine sound of the Shofar on Sinai was an assurance of the shofar of the messiah at the end of days. It belongs to the same universe of discourse as the one in which all human suffering, even the fact of death, was attributed to sin, in which animal sacrifice was accepted as an indispensable means of atoning for sin, and in which a whole people could be conceived as subjected to unceasing torment of body and mind for centuries because of failure to atone for some anonymous ancestral sin. It is possible for those who have become habituated to a copernican-newtonian-einsteinian physical cosmos, to a Lockian, Rousseaunian, Kantian Jeffersonian and Lincolnin political and social cosmos to get back to that pre-modern universe of discourse only as one revisits the scene of one's childhood, perhaps out of a certain nostalgia, but certainly not with a view to making it one's home.

If the Jewish people is to have a future, it must reconstruct its entire ideology so that it may feel itself perfectly at home in

the universe of discourse in which those who are most advanced intellectually, morally and spiritually at present dwell. In this modern universe of discourse religion is not based on the tradition of miraculous events and theophanies supposed to have taken place in ancient times. To the modern man, religion is based on the fundamental fact that all normal human beings are endowed with a capacity for salvation, provided that individually and collectively they coordinate their conduct and their institutions with the functioning of God as the power within and without them that makes for salvation. That conception of religion points to a better world in which we Jews, without giving up our historical uniqueness and continuity as a people, want to have a share. In that better world the orchestration of human life is not to serve merely as an accompaniment to any one nation or ecclesia playing solo. A far nobler motive for Jewish survival than the assertion of claims to spiritual superiority is the need for a people always to strive to outdo itself, always to keep on growing in moral and spiritual capacity. There can be no better evidence of such growth than the surrender of notions and beliefs which may have served a useful function in a people's childhood or youth, but which are out of place in a people which has attained maturity in the modern world.

Saturday, May 10, 1941

In a rapidly changing environment life cannot afford to be static. It either adjusts itself creatively to that environment, and it is on the upgrade or it fails to adjust itself creatively and it is on the downgrade. It either grows or it dies. No one can deny the rapidly changing character of the environment in which Judaism is at present trying to survive. Its failure to make the necessary creative adjustments cannot but result in its rapid decline and ultimate demise. Retaining a doctrine like the election of Israel, which is so out of

keeping with the best in the modern universe of discourse is bound to produce maladjustment in the Jew and to stunt the growth of Judaism. The consequence to Judaism can be nothing but fatal. This becomes evident in the actual effect which the retention of the doctrine must have on two types of people among us, one the rational and the other the romantic type. By retaining that doctrine we incapacitate both types for creative Jewish adjustment.

The rational type of Jew is the one who insists on clear and distinct thought in religion as in everything else. This does not mean that he will not admit into religion anything but that which is scientifically demonstrable, or that he has no feelings or that he is averse to mysticism. All it means is that in religion as in everything else we must not say what we do not mean. The rational type of Jew knows very well that in religion symbols and metaphors are indispensable, and that we cannot always articulate what they imply. But while it is true that we cannot always say what we mean we definitely should not say what we do not mean. The fact that we Jews have not paid sufficient regard to this simple ethical principle is probably responsible for our having alienated from Judaism some of the most worthwhile men and women. A striking illustration of the harm done by failing to reckon with the rational type of Jew is what the late Felix Adler has to say about himself in his "An Ethical Philosophy of Life" p. 26. He states that in his youth he was urged to go into the rabbinate despite his having held views he could not openly avow to his congregation. By pretending to fall in with their views he would ultimately get them to accept his. "Would this be fair to them or to myself" he adds. "Was I to act a lie in order to teach the truth?" There was especially one passage in the Sabbath service which brought me to the point of resolution. I mean the words spoken by the officiating minister as he holds up the Pentateuch scroll, "And this is

the Law which Moses set before the People of Israel." I had lately returned from abroad where I had had a fairly thorough course in Biblical exegesis and had become convinced that the Mosaic religion is so to speak a religious mosaic, and that there is hardly a single stone in it which can with certainty be traced to the authorship of Moses. Was I to repeat these words? It was impossible. I was certain that they would stick in my throat. On these grounds the separation was decided on by me, and became irremediable."

The effect of the retention of the doctrine of election on the romantic type of Jew though of an entirely different character, is nonetheless deterimental to Jewish survival. The romantic type of Jew deprecates all insistence on taking literally matters of ritual and liturgy. They are not intended, according to him, to convey exact truth but to arouse the religious emotions. That purpose is defeated by all attempts to pray in terms of our own universe of discourse. There is undoubtedly a great deal of truth to this contention/ Alongside the traditional prayer for the Sabbath which reads: In thy love and favor, O Lord our God let us inherit thy holy Sabbath" the equivalent one in the Union Prayer Book which reads "O help us to preserve the Sabbath as Israel's heritage from generation to generation" may sound extremely prosaic, yet in omitting the reference to God's favor and in alluding to the difficulty the Jew experiences in keeping the Sabbath in a non-Jewish environment, the modern adaptation strikes a truer note theologically and a more needed one socially. One may well suspect the romanticist of being so fond of tradition and poetry as to sacrifice his people for their sake. The point is that the romantic policy of "hands off" from whatever is sanctified by tradition, however outgrown it may have become, is sure to paralyze all endeavors leading to creative adjustment. This is just what has happened with the doctrine of election. The romantic fondness for it

has acted as an opiate on the Jewish consciousness. It haslulled the Jew into a state of drowsy complacency. It has prevented the Jewish mind from applying itself seriously and with all its might to the task of reformulating the place of Israel among the nations. So long as the Jew feels that he belongs to a group which for some reason or other is superior to all other peoples in the world, especially if it be a superiority which is inherited whether biologically or socially, and one which, as it has been reinterpreted these days, is "a form of noblesse oblige imposing upon him (the Jew) moral responsibilities" why should he go to the trouble of canvassing the problem of what kind of a group the Jews really are. He naturally finds this sense of superiority so satisfying and so uplifting that he cannot imagine how probing into the question of the status of the Jews as a people among the nations can have any other than a disconcerting and depressing effect. He therefore finds escape in the doctrine of election too comfortable to be disturbed. Thus as a res lt of our continuing to assert our superiority over the other nations, some of the most gifted of our people have either abandoned us or have done virtually nothing to help us live.

Sunday, May 11, 1941

Jewish survival depends entirely upon our achieving a moral realism, on the one hand will wean us away from futile compensatory mechanisms of imggined superiority and, on the other hand, will enable us to find the basis for intrinsic worth of Jewish life in the daily round of contemporary living. It is a mistake to imagine that once we abandon the doctrine of Israel's election there is no alternative except that of treating Jewish life as a purely secular affair, whether we are assimilationists and would prefer to see it liquidated, or we are Jewish nationalists and would like to see it enter the world arena of modern nations contending for a place in the sun. There a

third alternative which Reconstructionism submits for consideration. It is an alternative which would have the Jews realize that the only kind of Jewish survival which would constitute a creative adjustment to the world in which we now live is one in which the two elementsof their tradition would continue to function, viz: Jewish nationhood and Jewish religion but on terms radically different from those in the past. The essence of Jewish nationhood can no longer be identified with political unity or with religious uniformity. The political unity must be confined to Jews living in their homeland; the uniformity must be cultural rather than religious. Likewise the essence of Jewish religion can no longer be regarded as dependent upon the historicity of the supernatural events which are recorded in the Torah and as its logical conclusion of the election of Israel. Instead it will have to be based on what the objective study has shown to be the function of a religion in the life of a people. That function is so to inspire and direct the life of a people that it will help its individual men and women to make the most of their lives, or to achieve salvation.

With this alternative in mind, it becomes clear that the place previously occupied in the Jewish consciousness by the doctrine of election would have to be taken by the doctrine of vocation. The theological use of both terms "election" and "vocation" is one met with in Christianity, especially in Protestant teaching. Christianity was not contented with applying the doctrine of election to the church as a whole; it applied it also to the individual human being. It thereby indicated that the individual was subjected to some predestined divine decree which determined whether or not he was eligible to salvation. Jewish religion knows of no such inviduous distinction among individuals. It is more inclined to give to its concepts a collective significance. I submit therefore that it ought to do the same to the

Christian doctrine of vocation. It ought to extend the present theological significance of vocation to include nations as well as individuals. No nation is chosen or elected or superior to any other, but every nation should discover its vocation or calling and utilize that vocation as a source of religious experience and as a medium of salvation to its individual men and women.

I shall avail myself of a definition of the theological concept of vocation as formulated by Robert Lour Calhoan in his book "God and the Common Life" to indicate what its application would signify for the collective life of the Jewish people. An individual, according to him, may experience the presence of God in his life and have a sense of a divine calling, if he is engaged in doing needful work, if that work calls into play his best powers and makes for their development and finally if it enables him to contribute his share to the world's work and the common life. If the Jews throughout the world would reckon in their various collective efforts with these three principles of vocation their religion would experience a revival which would be tantamount to divine revelation. For the Jews as a people to be engaged in needful work at the present time means for them to accept the threefold task of 1) salvaging the millions of our people who are menaced with extinction; 2) reclaiming and rebuilding our ancient homeland for the homeless millions of Jews and reconstituting them into a creative commonwealth; and 3) organizing Jewish communal life in the diaspora on a religio-cultural basis. If this vocation is to be accepted by Jews in the spirit of religion then it must be able to enlist the highest abilities of our gifted men and women. It must provide work for their talents and offer those talents such fields for self-expression and development that their possessors would not have to feel that they are stunting their powers by employing them for the expression of Jewish values. Finally the very method and

Hershberg. —
AARA
June 1941

and spirit in which the Jews as a people would carry on the urgently needful work described in the foregoing should be of such a character as to make them sharers in the efforts to solve the fundamental problem of involved in the art of living together as individuals and as groups. This certainly is a vocation to which we Jews might well consecrate ourselves and one which by giving meaning and direction to our lives would give content and a sense of reality to our religion. We shall then no longer need to have our morale bolstered up by such a spiritual anachronism as extolling God for not having made us like the other nations. etc. Instead we shall find our calling as a people so absorbing, so satisfying and so spiritually thrilling that we shall have every reason in the world to thank God for having manifested his love unto us by sanctifying us by his commandments, by bringing us nigh unto his services and by rendering us worthy to be identified with his great and holy name.

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Monday, May 12, 1941

I was unaware at the time I made my entry on April 29 that all the members of the faculty of the Seminary were being corraled to sign their names to a letter in which they declare that they find themselves compelled to dissociate themselves from my theology and from the New Haggadah.

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Tuesday, May 13, 1941

A week ago Monday (May 5) I went to Philadelphia to attend the 41st annual convention of the Rabbinical Assembly. I came in time to be present at the dinner at which the Seminary campaign was discussed. After the usual procedure which ends in a number of men making promises to raise various amonts, Lang, the president of the RA and Arzt, the field secretary for the Seminary, asked me to say a few words of greeting. I gave what Arzt described as a good "pep talk." Finkelstein also approved.

After dinner we all convened in the auditorium of Klein's synagogue. Klein as chairman of the evening session introduced Prof. L. Ginzberg. Klein's remarks were those of a high-school adolescent trying to be humorous. Then the great man arose and everybody rose in his honor. Addressing himself to Klein's reference to him as expert in mathematics, he tried to prove that he knows even more about mathematics than Klein suspected. Then he went off into an excursus on the significance of the session's being designated as academic. What he dilated on had nothing whatever to do with the subject for which he had been scheduled. Convergences and divergences in Palestinian and Babylonian Talmud, which as Klein explained simply meant Resemblances and Differences between the two Talmudim. But the substance of the excursus was that only those who speak from a knowledge of details had a right to make generalizations about Judaism. Again he repeated almost word for word what he had said a few months ago when he took part in the conference called by the committee on Law, and what he said about four or five years ago in answer to a paper I had read at one of the conventions of the Rabbinical Assembly. Only a Saadia and a Maimonides had a right to philosophize about Judaism because they came to it with a full knowledge of it, he went on to say, but not a Philo who came to Judaism merely with a knowledge of philosophy. So people who come nowadays from sociology and reduce the mizvot, which Judaism considers as divine commands, to folkways (he kept on saying "fokesvays") are destroying Judaism. Then came the climax. "Such peop le have no right to remove the doctrine of the election of Israel from Judaism. Anyone who denies that doctrine reads himself out of Judaism."

I did not feel inclined to reply to him right there and then; I would have created a disturbance. After all the platform was his and he had a right to go on. After having delivered the foregoing tirade

on which he had spent at least 25 minutes, he proceeded to give the talk on the subject announced. He repeated for the most part what he had said at the dinner given in his honor a few weeks ago. When he was through it was 10:20. Kadushin who had been scheduled to read a paper in Hebrew on the Doctrine of Election in Rabbinic Literature must have been on tenterhooks waiting for Ginzberg to get through. I was not going to interrupt the program at that point, Kadushin dealt with his subject from a historical point of view. Toward the end of his paper he brought his argument to a head by saying that the Sages had no abstract concept corresponding with the term "election," but that the idea of election functioned for them only in conjunction with a context which contained references to God's having brought them near to his service and having given them commandments.

When Kadushin was through I asked for the floor. Klein called me to the platform. I got quite an ovation which contrasted strongly with the small applause which had greeted Ginzberg's statement about the doctrine of Israel's election. In calm fashion I pointed out that Ginzberg's ~~xxxxxxxx~~ transgressed his own principle of not making generaliations without basis in fact when he read me out of Judaism because I did not include in the Haggadah reference to the doctrine of election. As I said this he called out "I mean historical Judaism." I replied at once "But historical Judaism is a developing Judaism." Moreover I added that insofar as facts were concerned, the facts mentioned by Kadushin confirmed my position in the matter rather than his.

The majority of those present were very happy over what I said and the way I said it.

I stayed over at Philadelphia till after the luncheon at which addresses were made on the question of release time in the schools by Gordis and Dushkin.

Ira told me that one of the resolutions passed by the convention was a statement condemning journalists in the Yiddish press who denounced the editors of the Haggadah as being assimilationists. Abraham A. Neuman, who is now president of Dropsie, his reward for thirty years of service as flunkey to Adler, opposed the resolution by all kinds of specious arguments. But they didn't work.

The sum total of the convention is that the men are more in the dark than ever as to what Conservative Judaism stands for. When one of the men complained that such was the case after 41 years of the RA's existence, Simon Greenberg said that Judaism has been in existence over 3000 years and we still don't know what it is. To what may we ascribe this kind of sophistry to a perverted mind or to a perverted will?

I forgot to record that I read my paper on "How to Vitalize Adult Jewish Study" at the Conference on Adult Jewish Education which took place at the Seminary on Sunday, May 4 in the afternoon. Most of what I said displeased Finkelstein and Arzt who sat on the platform, and who shrank in their seats when I stressed the fact that we must take the laity into our confidence and have them share the problems of our inner life.

* * *

Friday, May 16, 1941

On Wednesday afternoon I attended a meeting of the Seminary faculty which was devoted mainly to the question of what to do with members of the graduating class who had failed to complete the necessary requirements of some of the courses. The greatest offender is Mordecai Waxman. Although every member of the faculty argued against graduating them, Finkelstein used all kinds of specious arguments in favor

of graduating them. One of his tricks in the argument was to divert the discussion to the question of what measures to adopt in the future against similar recurrences. L. Ginzberg not wishing to find himself on the losing side discovered that F. was right and that ended the discussion.

As the meeting was about to adjourn F. made reference to the correspondence in relation to the New Haggadah and stated that the matter would be further discussed at a meeting specially devoted to the issues raised in the correspondence.

Last Tuesday night a meeting of a number of the supporters of the Reconstructionist took place at my house. They constituted an Advisory Board in the making. Among them was Dr. I. C. Rubin, Garfunkel, Doniger, Friedenberg, Levine etc. I aired my difficulties with the Seminary. After considerable discussion it was decided to have a committee see Finkelstein in reference to my promise not to campaign among the Seminary graduates for the Reconstructionist Foundation, a promise elicited practically under duress and without definition of its nature.

Due to my disappointment at the meager attendance, I found great difficulty in stating my case.

On the other hand, on Wednesday night at the meeting of the SAJ Board of Trustees which took place at Harry Liebovitz's home, I gave a clear and fluent presentation of the case. There too the decision was arrived at to have a committee meet with Finkelstein.

What is at stake in this controversy over the doctrine of election? It is not true as the Orthodox opponents would make out that the continued existence of the Jewish people is at stake. They are deliberately misrepresenting the issue when they maintain that the abandon-

ment of the doctrine is intended as a step toward the surrender of Jewish nationhood and toward assimilation. There is no use arguing with those who wilfully distort the truth. Neither is it true, as the Conservative opponents maintain, that what is at stake in this controversy is the continuity of historical Judaism. Historical Judaism has not been a standstill Judaism. In the course of its career it has taken on new beliefs and dropped beliefs and practices of long standing. Its existence is in noway jeopardized by the elimination of the belief that we Jews are as different from the other nations as light is from darkness. On the contrary a time has come when it is to the interest of Judaism to do with the doctrine of religious superiority what King Hezekiah did with the bronze serpent. Although according to tradition it had been made by Moses Hezekiah did not hesitate to demolish it when he saw that it became an object of idolatry. This action of Hezekiah was used by Rabbi Judah the Prince as a precedent to vindicate his altering an unwarranted religious ordinance. It may also well serve us as precedent in our desire to prevent our tradition from becoming petrified.

What then is really at stake in this controversy? First, the religious and ethical growth of the Jewish people. If those who happen to possess the power of the press or of an institution should succeed in strangling the sincere effort of any group of men and women to reformulate Jewish belief so as to bring it into conformity with what they conscientiously regard as the highest ethical and religious truth, the Jewish people would be condemned to spiritual stagnation. A second matter at stake is religious freedom in Jewish life. It is not the purpose of the Reconstructionist movement to legislate for the whole of Jewry. It merely wishes to formulate a philosophy and a program for those who find the existing programs and philosophies of Judaism unsatisfactory. If there are Jews who do not want their

religious worship vitiated by sentiments that offend their reason or their moral sense, should they be restrained from obeying the dictates of their conscience? Is it a crime to exact of oneself absolute sincerity when addressing God? Does the future of Judaism depend upon that regimentation of beliefs and conviction which we condemn when practiced by other peoples? There was a time when no unity could be conceived without absolute uniformity. Totalitarianism is seeking to bring back that time into our own era. But we Jews who are the most tragic victims of totalitarianism should be the first to respect the principle of democracy and live up to the principle of the worth of individuality, which we proclaim in season and out of season.

* * *

Monday, May 19, 1941

I have done it! My position in the Seminary has become quite untenable. It is depriving me not only of peace of mind, without which I can not do any creative thinking, but of the freedom to develop the philosophy and program of Reconstructionism. I have therefore taken a decisive step which I hope will lead to my emancipation. Last Saturday afternoon I went to see Stephen Wise and, after telling him about Finky's and Ginzberg's maneouverings to scotch the Reconstructionist movement, I asked him whether there was still a niche for me in his institution, the JIR. He could not of course give me a definite answer, but he expressed satisfaction that I had applied to him when I did, because the amalgamation with the Hebrew Union College was liable to be consummated any day, and then it would have been too late perhaps to consider my application. (He did not use the terms "apply" and "application." These are my own terms.)

Last night I gave the principal address at the second annual meeting of the Reconstructionist Foundation which took place at the synagogue of the SAJ. My subject was "The Doctrine of the Chosen People." I was pleasantly surprised at the large attendance - over 400 - which the meeting drew. We had planned to have the meetings take place in the social hall which seats only about 120 people, but we soon found that it could not possibly accommodate the number likely to come. So we asked those who were in the social hall to go down to the synagogue. Dr. I. C. Rubin opened the meeting at 8:35. Milton Steinberg delivered greetings, not, as he said, in the name of his congregation, but in his own name, and in which he told of what Reconstructionism meant for him and his congregation. Edward Sandrow who had been scheduled to deliver greetings could not come; but he sent in a very hearty message of approval and encouragement. Ira spoke well, as usual and Mrs. Grossman did well too. My address lasted about one and a half hours, but was listened to the entire time with rapt attention. There was not much time left for discussion, but I did answer a few questions. From every standpoint the meeting was a success.

* * *

Saturday, May 24, 1941

When the Sunday night meeting was over a number of people felicitated me on my address. Among them was Mrs. Blume L,,betkin, the wife of Louis Lubetkin. Immediately after she shook my hand she sank to the floor. Three physicians who happened to be among the crowd which by this time had virtually cleared out of the auditorium were called back, but they could do nothing for her because she was dead.

The funeral took place in that same auditorium Tuesday morning.

Life has become so unreal these days that death seems to have lost its terrors.

Last Wednesday I took part in the Fellowship Day which was sponsored by the Central Conference of American Rabbis. Rabbi Wohl of Cincinnati was the principal organizer and he was helped by Israel of Baltimore. The sessions were quite informal. The discussions dealt with such questions as how to augment the authority of the rabbis, what was to be their attitude toward interfaith, good will work and toward Jewish defense activities. The attednace at the opening of the sessions was about 20, it gradually increased to about 60 and tapered off to about 15. The sessions lasted from 10:30 to 4:30. I was there the entire time.

Some of the things I learned were the following: 1) The Orthodox element represented by such men as Jung, Herbert Goldstein, Sam Levy (president of the Rabbinical Council-Alumni of the Yeshivat Isaac Elchana) insist on being intransigent and separtist despite their mingling with Conservative and Reform Jews. For the first time I heard the use of the term "denominations" for the various groupings in Jewish life. Jung was the one who established its usage that day at the sessions as proper. He said it was a "clean word. 2) Face to face encounter in such fellowship gatherings is bound to have a salutary effect that transcends even the intransigence of the different groups. For the first time in my life I shook hands with Jung and actually spoke to him. He had said in his talk that he could not understand how any one who did not believe in a personal God could say (p.99) When I spoke to him I said to him that some day I would like to have a talk with him and explain to him how that is possible. He was quite affable and promised to arrange for our meeting some day after Shabuot. In the same way I broke the ice in my relationship to Feldman, the Reform rabbi of Hartford. I had heard of his opposition to Reconstructionism. I used this opportunity to try to find out what was the reason for his opposition. What I learned was interesting.

First, he explained that he resented the use of the term "Reformist," in which he discerned a slur on the movement, and secondly, he felt that I was unjust in identifying the Reform movement with the Pittsburgh Platform. He and a number of others had long moved away from that ideology. He mentioned Silver and Brickner. I cannot say that I am altogether convinced that these are really the reasons for his antagonism to Reconstructionism. I am inclined to suspect that some personal factors are responsible for that antagonism. Nevertheless, I expect to reckon with his objections.

* * *

Sunday, June 1, 1941

The meeting of the Reconstructionist Editorial Board last Monday was the third meeting given over for the most part to conference with representative os the main national agencies engaged in Jewish defense activities. The first of the three meetings was devoted to a discussion with Louis Lipsky of the Jewish Congress, the second with Morris Waldman of the American Jewish Committee and the most recent with Messrs. Held and Sherman of the Jewish Labor Committee. From Lipsky I learned that the Congress is a paper organization and that the synagogue was the only institution from which should come the main drive for the organization of normal Jewish life. From Waldman I gathered that the AJCis becoming more democratized and that it is the most efficient of the defense agencies. From the representatives of the Jewish Labor Committee I gathered that the Jewish workers are out of touch with affirmative Jewish life. All in all the effect of these interviews on me was depressing because they brought home to me the truth which I had sensed all along, that the Jewish laity in all its strata is completely uninterested in Judaism as such.

Glenzberg

At Faculty

meeting

Last Thursday night I spoke at Earl Hall together with Lipsky under the auspices of the Educational Dept. of the ZOA on the subject of Jewish nationalism. I tried to formulate a conception of the status of world Jewry in conformity with the concept of democratic nationalism. Lipsky took the position that such discussions of Jewish nationalism ought to be tabled at the present time and that we ought to focus all our interest on making it possible for the Jews to live in a free and untampered Jewish life in Palestine. The attainment of such a goal would make it possible for Jews in the diaspora to become absorbed by the general population. How one can shut his eyes to realities and to urgent problems in beyond me.

The audience was very heterogeneous and the discussion was stupied. The two chairman, Rabbis Hoffman and Blumenfield did little to raise the meeting to a high level.

Today I gave the sermon on Divine Election vs. National Selection. It was well received.

Last Sunday night the annual meeting of the SAJ took place. The best part of this meeting was the singing by the choral group which Judith had organized and had been leading. She is doing a splendid job in the SAJ both with the young and the old.

* * *

Friday, June 6, 1941

After the Seminary faculty at its meeting yesterday afternoon was through with its regular business, it took up the discussion of the matter of its correspondence with me. F. opened the discussion with some general remarks. He contrasted the wide variety of belief and practice within Judaism with the uniformity and authoritative character of whatever come forth from the Catholic Church. If the Seminary

is to be the hub of American Jewry (referring to a remark I had made at the recent convention of the Rabbinical Assembly) it must be in a position to present a united front (this expression is mine) and not create confusion in the minds of its graduates. (He didn't put it quite as emphatically, but in his mealy-mouthed way this is what he wanted to express.) Then he called upon Prof. Ginzberg.

Ginzberg directed himself in his remarks specifically to me. He said in substance the following:

The Seminary was established mainly to foster a knowledge of the past development of Judaism. It could not however avoid the task of affording guidance to its students in problems which had to do with the future. In all such matters it assumed considerable latitude in theory but not in practice. The Kraites were fought bitterly by the Rabbamites because they departed from the established practice. In contrast there were always heretics who, because they conformed to the established code were not molested. Conformity with the spirit of the Seminary implied subscribing to historical Judaism. Historical Judaism does not permit any changes except from the standpoint of the law as it came down from the past. It is averse to any interpretation or modification of the law which comes from philosophical premises. We cannot permit majorities in congregations to decide what is permitted and what is not. The fact that certan manufacturers approve of changes does not render them legitimate. That has the misfortune with the Reform movement. How then does any one venture to lay hands on the liturgy? It has been sanctified by the ages. It is like a cathedral. If the windows of a cathedral need repair, only a skilled artist should undertake to repair them. He (Ginzberg) know s something about the liturgy. He should have been consulted and not young boys who are totally ignorant of such matters.

It looks as though this last statement contains the basic reason for this entire fuss. I understand that Ginzberg's refusal to support Epstein's efforts to ease the Jewish law with regard to the Agunah is due to the fact that Epstein had not consulted Ginzberg before he published his proposed measures. In a way he cannot be blamed for wanting to make use of all that learning which he has accumulated, but it is entirely his own fault that he is not consulted. He has never given the slightest indication of reckoning with the fact that we are living in a different world from the one in which what he calls Historical Judaism arose. Being fundamentally a sceptic, he has no confidence in the deliberate human effort to improve life. Unfortunately the mess that some of the modern world improves have made of life plays into the hands of conservative sceptics like him.

After he was through F. called on Prof. Marx, who merely reiterated in very general terms what Ginzberg had said. My turn came next.

I told the story of how I came to deal with the problems of the Jewish future in my teaching in the Seminary and the TI. The Seminary had omitted the teaching of the Pentateuch from its curriculum because it hoped in this way to evade the problems arising out of the documentary theory. Being faced with the task of teaching the men the interpretation of the Pentateuch, which I deem central to Judaism, I had to evolve the functional approach which was compatible with the documentary theory. (With their permission, I quoted what Friedlander told me Schechter had said to him when he was being interviewed with regard to joining the Seminary faculty. This remark is quoted in one of the earlier volumes of this Journal.) From that point on I gave a brief resume of my experiences with Adler and Ginzberg who had indicated on different occasions their disapproval of what I was teaching and writing. But I had to shoulder the responsibility of grappling with problems of Jewish life which they could very well evade.

Ginzberg was entirely wrong in believing that I catered to the wishes of "certain manufacturers." I was chiefly concerned in winning for Judaism the thinking men and women.

I seldom spoke with such calm and poise at a faculty meeting. As a rule I always feel tense and uncomfortable when I am with them, even when the subject discussed does not pertain to me personally. This time, however, I felt as though I had the better of them and that they were on the defensive, and yet I said nothing that indicated an awareness of the ridiculous position in which they were maneouvering themselves with every remark that they made.

As illustrations of how glad I was to discuss with them these problems I mentioned two: one, the doctrine of Israel's election, the other the assumption that liturgy must be uniform.

Bavlik who may be a good Hebrew versifier, but who is all muddled up when it comes to analytic thinking, had to put his word in. It did not take him long to expose his chavinistic nationalism, which I at once punctured by saying that it was further removed from the traditional conception of Jewish nationhood than was my conception of nationalism.

I omitted in the above summary of my answer to Ginzberg the following: He had referred to the Seminary as representing Historical Judaism. In reply I pointed out that with the advent of Schechter there took place a greater departure from what the Seminary originally stood for than the departure implied in my conception of Judaism. From what Ginzberg said the Seminary now stood for. I then told how shocked we students were at the time when Schechter made his first appearance at the old Seminary on a bright sunny Sabbath carrying a huge umbrella and books and papers. That action came under the category of violation of the Sabbath, which according to Orthodox Judaism to which the Seminary under M$_o$rais had been dedicated, was punishable by stoning.

I also pointed out that I took issue with Ginzberg as to what we are to understand by Historical Judaism. His was a static conception. I preferred to view it dynamically as still in the process of development.

F. from his side and I from mine succeeded in keeping the discussion from becoming a free for all fight. F. deprecated some of the strong words used by Ginzberg, and I made them understand that I invited this kind of discussion.

After the meeting G. said to me that he had never intended to read me out of Judaism. What he said at the recent convention of the Rabbinical Assembly of Philadelphia had reference to Historical Judaism. (i.e. any one who denies the doctrine of Israel's election reads himself out of Historical Judaism. Since Historical Judaism means for him traditional Judaism, his statement is entirely tacitological.

* * *

Thursday, June 12, 1941

This is 7:30 the morning after a most delightful family celebration of my 60th birthday anniversary together with that of Naomi's getting the doctorate in medicine and Ira's getting the doctorate in philosophy. Although I went to bed at 1:30 I have been up since 7:00 and could not resume my sleep because my mind is in a state of excitement over the new areas of thought opened up by an expression I happened to come across in Husik's translation of Albos' Ikkarim. It is the expression "3nvisage Judaism." To begin with, that expression got me out the bag of verbiage one inevitably falls into, the moment one begins to define things. I have begun to work again of late on "Modern Trends in Judaism" and I have been up against it in trying to point out that there are different ways of conceiving Judaism and that there must nevertheless be one way of conceiving it that embraces them all. But that is the least. "3nvisaging" has come to be for me a

sort of sesame. I can now make myself understood by pointing out that the history of Judaism is really a story of the different ways in which Judaism has been envisaged. For the nonce I shall not deal with pre-rabbinic Judaism. The Rabbis may be said to have envisaged Judaism as Torah. But what did Torah mean to them? It meant to them the whole pattern of life that made man human in the way God would have him be. They believed that that pattern of life was the one according to which God had created the world, because they identified it with the Hokinah in the Book of Proverbs. It would seem as though there could be nothing outside Torah. Yet there was, namely, Derek Erez. Derek Erez was the unconscious stage of Torah. The statement that it preceded Torah really does not mean that it was outside Torah but that it preceded it as the unconscious instinct precedes the conscious habit in which it operates.

Then came the medieval theologians and they envisaged Judaism or the Torah as divine law. They followed in this regard the Muslim theologians who had been influenced by Greek philosophy. In that philosophy the human pattern of life was always envisaged as functioning through the state and hence through man-made law. The theologians to bring up the Koran to the dignity of philosophy as taught by the Greeks cast their notions of it in terms of the Greek envisagement of the pattern of life. Hence they spoke of the Koran as divine law. As a matter of fact long before them, Augustine also having had his mind shaped by Greek thinking wrote the City of God, which was the Christian analogue of Plato's Republic and Aristotle's Politics. The Jewish and Christian theologians followed suit. Thomas Aquinas speaks of the divine law itself as consisting of two parts, the old and the new law.

The Kabbalists envisaged Judaism or the Torah as the whole of nature, physical as well as human. They did the reverse of what modern science does. Modern science assimilates nature as it operates in man to nature as it operates in the extra-human environment. The Kabbalists treated the extra-human nature as though it were the extension of those laws of human nature which God has implanted in man. The two together constitute Torah. The literal meaning of the Torah deals with the human life pattern and the esoteric with the non-human life pattern. The knowledge of the esoteric enables one to manipulate the physical world, and to achieve such purposes as cannot be achieved merely through the knowledge of the literal meaning of the Torah.

The ~~in~~ modern Jewish theologians envisage Judaism or Torah as religion. Religion as thus used is fundamentally what Cicero had in mind, namely, what man has to do to stand in proper relationship to God or to gods. This is part, perhaps, of the most primitive thinking about man's relationship to what transcends his power. It has been revived in modern times in order to effect a sort of compromise between secularism which emphasizes man's power to make his world and the realization that there is much in the world beyond his control. Hence the dichotomy between what he can control, which is the object of his normal every day interest and what he cannot control which is therefore the factor of all his crises. Since we do not like to think about crises except when we have to, we do not like to bother about religion except when we have to. When Falstaff thinks of religion is sure that he is about to die.

In suggesting the need of envisaging Judaism as civilization, there is ~~in~~ a sense a return to the way the Rabbis envisaged it without the limited pre-scientific connotations characteristic of their way of thinking.

* * *

Monday, June 16, 1941

Wednesday,(June 11) of last week was an extraordinarily happy day for me. In the morning I attended the graduation exercises at the N.Y.U. campus, which Naomi got her M.D. degree. They were virtually a replica of Columbia graduation exercies of the week before which I had also attended because Ira then got his Ph.D. degree. Both of these events together with the occasion of my 60th birthday were celebrated at a family gathering at our home on Wednesday night. Judith and Ira got up the enclosed "Ballad for American Jews" a take off on the present popular "Ballad for Americans.

After my ups on Wednesday I had my downs on Friday when Chipkin discussed with me the letter he and I had gotten from Finky that morning, in reference to the Friedlander classes and told me about the interview he had had that same day with Finky. What particularly enraged me was what seemed to me F's deliberate effort to have Greenberg and Arzt supplant me. In this state of exasperation I found the task of attending the dinner given by Mrs. Adler to the graduating class last Saturday and the various mummeries connected with the graduation exercies last Sunday (yesterday) a more trying ordeal than ever. I was on the point of staying away from the dinner but I overcame my resistance and went anyhow. Now that the ordeal is over I am rather glad I went through it instead of around it.

Some time ago the Recon. Edit. Board decided to hold a series of sessions during the period of June 10-20 for the purpose of discussing the formulation of a "Guide for Jewish Usage." We met last week on Tuesday, Thursday and Friday. Our fourth session took place this morning. So far the four members of the Board who were

present at all of the sessions were Eugene Kohn, Ira, Dinin and I. Rabbi Michelson has also been present at all of the sessions and has been taking good notes which he is working up into a report of the transactions.

As was to be expected we have had to make clear to ourselves some of the fundamental principles of Reconstructionism. The specific purpose of the sessions has so far been carried out to the extent that we have discussed quite in detail the observance of the Sabbath.

Two problems have emerged from the discussions. 1) How to reconcile the two purposes of Reconstructionism, that of stressing the totality and unity of Jewish life with that of formulating specific ideas and patterns of conduct which, while they may satisfy those who are dissatisfied with the traditional ideas and patterns, are certain to arouse opposition and to cause division. This is a proglem of strategy; 2) How to reconcile the two purposes of Reconstructionism in dealing with tradition, that of maintaining the continuity of Jewish life and thought and that of incorporating new truth and new ethical lines of action. This calls for the setting up of norms of interpretation.

= An interesting classification of folkways was that suggested by Milton Steinberg (who was prevented on account of illness) from attending two out of the four sessions, but who otherwise has been an active participant.) He said that folkways may be: 1) irrational in form and in content; 2) rational in content and irrational in form; and 3) rational in form and rational in content. This suggestion came in the course of the discussion whether or not to permit smoking on the Sabbath.

The one disturbing factor at these sessions is the presence of Boxer. He has been, as Rabbi Hoffman put it, more of an obstructionist than a Reconstructionist. The position he has been defending

at the sessions has been that we should retain the statement concerning Israel's superiority over the other nations, because it may be reinterpreted to mean that in the particular area of life occupied by Israel, Israel has achieved a degree of excellence unequalled by other people in that same area. Despite the utter nonsense of that interpretation he kept on defending it with a (?p.106(sophistry that tried the patience of the rest of us. By the same token he would object to the elimination of the prayer for the restoration of the Temple and the animal sacrifices. They could be made to mean, according to him, entirely acceptable to us. All in all, he has been a nuisance ever since he has been with us. If we have permitted him to go along with us, it has been because we have ascribed to him a certain nuisance value. We have been afraid of our becoming ingrown and lacking in the stimulus of challenge and we have believed that his presence would guard us against such danger. But his general bearing toward Reconstructionism has been that of the Rasha in the Haggada who keeps on saying "to you" and excluding himself from the generality of our consensus in matters both practical and theoretical. There is also the possibility of his acting as a conscious or unconscious stooge of Finky's. For that reason nothing would please us better than if he were to ease himself out of our company.

* * *

Tuesday, June 24, 1941

Two days ago Germany declared war on Russia and the experts are already reported to be discussing whether it will take her four weeks or three months to complete the job of conquering Russia and how she would be able to hold and consolidate her conquests. Possibly mankind is living over again what the population in Europe experienced when the Huns ravaged it. But never in the entire past

were there such rapid and such large-scale reshufflings of facts, adherences and policies. All the ideologies which have been developed in democratic countries to counter the communai-pact which was in force till the day before yesterday will have to be scrapped. Willy-nilly human beings will have to learn -- if they can -- to make subtle distinctions such as those between fascist totalitarianism and communist totalitarianism, between democracy and facism, on the one hand, and democracy and communism on the other, etc. ad infinitum. In the meantime Hitler who has the predominance in weight of metal and the highly mechanized organization of peace and war industries, is sweeping every thing before him. If most of us go on working and striving as if there will still be a world worth living in, it is because the will to live gets the better of our calculations and our fears. With conditions so unpredictable, despite the fact that in each case so far it has always been the greatest evil which has managed to be the unforessen, it is natural to hope that some unforseen good will emerge. That is the way I feel about Russia's being forced to fight Germany. By the same token that she proved Napoleon's undoing she will in all likelihood prove Hitler's nemesis.

In the meantime new horrors are undoubtedly being visited upon the Jews who are in the direct path of the brutal German armies. If we were to do what we should we ought to indicate in some way that we share with those Jews the hellish agonies through which they are passing. We ought to deny ourselves the comforts of life and fast and pray and determine to go on living and fighting for those ideals which alone give any sense to the Jewish tragedy. But it would be nothing less than quixotic even to suggest such measures. Hence we go on living like dumb brutes until our time comes to be taken to the house of slaughter.

It seems incongrous after realizing what a new tornado has struck the world in the recent break between Germany and Russia to be recording the trivialities of one's own life. Yet we go on eating and drinking and leisuring and sleeping, so why not proceed with noting down the things that matter in one's own life?

The war of nerves which Finky, with the aid of Ginzy, has been carrying on against me since I have come back from Palestine is also spreading over a wider front. First it was the Friedlander classes, then the Teachers Institute, then the Reconstructionist campaign, then the Haggadah and now it is the courses I'm giving in Homiletics.

Today was the second of the third-degree xxx torture sessions held for my "benefit" by the Seminary Faculty. It was a continuation of the one that was held a few weeks ago. After the routine business of the Faculty meeting was over F. began gropingly by suggesting that some method be found for going on with the discussions. Ginzberg, ignoring the suggestion, addressed himself directly to me. He wanted me to answer the following two points: 1) In the first place, he understood me to say that I considered it my duty to teach the students at the Seminary practically all the subjects of the curriculum, Talmud, Bible, History and what not. How is it possible for one person to master all those subjects? Even he wouldn't think of teaching a subject like Bible. 2) Secondly, reverting to the Haggadah and the implied freedom to make changes in doctrine and practice, he wanted to know what was to prevent me from going still further and introducing a Sunday-Sabbath, or with Klausner, delcaring Jesus to have been a Jewish prophet. As a matter of fact one student this year actually preached a sermon on a New Testament text. (This was a deliberate perversion of the truth. Winokur who took as his text (p. 107) stated in his introductory remarks that in contrast with the New Testament

teaching that we should not judge, the Rabbis gave sounder advice in that they said (p. 107) . We have for example the age old belief in the establishment of . How did I take it upon myself to ? (p.108) from the Grace after Meals. Again he repeated the statement about a certain person who wanted to know from him whether I advocated the abolition of circumcision because I omitted the reference to it. Of course G told him I still believe in it, but that did not alter the impression that the Seminary tolerated one of its Faculty members to publish a kind of Haggadah which broke with tradition. There must be a distinction between breaking with tradition and continuing a tradition. He wanted to know where I drew the line and what common ground there could be between me and the rest of the Faculty. Once more he alluded to the distinction I drew between Kashrut in the home and Kashrut outside the home.

In my reply I stated the following: I denied what G has ascribed to me, giving the impression that I voiced the opinion of the faculty. As for my saying that I deemed it my duty to teach or interpret all the subjects of the curriculum, of course that was too absurd to require refutation. I may be wrong in my views, but I still have some common sense. What I did say was that I have to bear the responsibility of guiding the men in what they are to preach, and therefore have to deal with the future. In order however to have that future be in line of continuity with the past I find myself compelled to do with the other subjects of the curriculum what the one who teaches philosophy has to do with the extant sciences. That does not mean that the philosopher presumes to be a master of all the sciences. Some of course would deny philosophy any legitimate place in the organization of thought; but most thinkers do accord it a place, due to the fact that the mind demands a unification of the sciences.

Concretely speaking it is necessary for me to get the students to realize that there are preachable values to the Bible apart from the particular questions dealt with in the scientific study of the Bible. It takes them a long time to acquire that kind of approach. This is what I meant by saying that I had occasion to touch upon their other studies.

As for the second point raised by G. I pointed out that throughout all the years I have been associated with the Seminary I have openly taken issue with the position of the Historical school which does not permit itself to legitimatize any change until after it has been adopted by catholic Israel. The only way to meet the future is to introduce whatever changes are likely to produce a more intensive Jewish life. This does not mean that I am averse to having specific norms which would indicate how far we may go in changing without imperilling Jewish life and continuity.

However, as to the difference between breaking with tradition and continuing it I definitely took issue with Ginzberg. He stresses the point that the practice is everything and that any deliberate departure from the standard ritual or liturgy is a break with tradition. I contend that the break takes place the moment we stop believing what the traditionalist believed. As soon as we find ourselves incapable of subscribing to the supernatural origin of the Torah, the restoration of the sacrificial cult, the advent of a personal messiah, we have broken with tradition.

Translating the changed belief into changed practice is not altogether unknown within the Seminary circles. The United Synagogue has published a special Machzor for the Conservative Jews. The only difference, to be sure, is that in place of (p. 109)

it read . Though this change is not followed through consistently it is sufficient to indicate that the principle of deliberate change has begun to penetrate even the Seminary.

G. had mentioned that there ought to be some set of principles which should govern us when dealing with such problems. I agreed that it would be a fine thing for those who have the ability to formulate such principles to shoulder the responsibility for doing so. But unfortunately after more than half a century of existence Historical Judaism has not even made a beginning in that direction.

Lieberman, who has been added only recently to the Faculty, found it necessary to have his say, and to question me how I came to publish the Haggadah without consulting Ginzberg, Marx and Finkelstein. Am I not aware that I am hurting the reputation and influence of the Seminary with the masses?

The impudence of this recent arrival, taking me to task for jeopardizing the interests of the Seminary was only equalled by Bavlis' outburst against me charging me with secularizing Judaism in addition to destroying the ancient forms which constitute its pagrantry. Yet I held myself in check and tried to reply calmly to their insults.

But Finky, realizing that I was getting the better of the argument, started a new line of attack. He let the cat out of the bag when he said that "the main cause of all the rancor" was the nature of the sermons delivered every Sabbath in the Seminary synagogue by the students. He described them as consisting of "half-truths and half-heresies." His own daughter Hadassah had sworn off attending the services because she could not bear to listen to those sermons. He could not see of what good such sermons were. They could not be preached before any congregation to which the students applied for positions. They emphasized what Jews cannot and should not believe instead of what Jews should believe. This diatribe of Finky's was followed up by Ginzberg's who mentioned the sermon which dealt with the belief in the world-to-come as having been particularly offensive. "Why should Jews be told," said G, "that they don't have

to believe in personal immortality? Why preach such ideas altogether?"

Even this outbreak of Finky's didn't cause me to lose my temper. I merely said I should like to have the Faculty read the sermons and see whether they bear out the charges made by F. He quickly took up my suggestion and appointed Gordis, Greenberg and Arzt as a committee to study the sermons delivered by the men this year.

This ordeal lasted from about 11:00 to 1:00

Immediately after lunch I phoned to Stephen S. Wise to ask him whether he had any news for me. He asked me whether I was speaking from the Seminary, because he didn't want to be overheard by what he described as the "Seminary Gestapo." He just got through, he said reading a review in a European periodical of Finky's "The Pharisees," in which F. got a lambasting. As for news, he promised to call me up on Thursday afternoon after he came back from the convention of the CCAR (?).

* * *

Wednesday, June 25, 1941

This campaign that F. is waging against me is not only a war of nerves but it is also an ideological war. Unfortunately, however, human nature is so constituted that the ego is always implicated in ideologies. It would be intolerant of me to blame F. for the distaste he has toward Reconstructionism, although here again I find it impossible to clear him of the guilt of intellectual dishonesty in that he insists on the new dualism that has emerged in the sphere of religion. Formerly the dualism was between faith and reason, revelation and philosopy. Now it is between what you believe and what you say you believe. He and Ginzberg et al have long ceased to believe in a personal God, in a supernatural Torah, in the historicity of the miracles, in the resurrection of the dead, in personal immortality and in a personal Messiah.

Yet they assume that the way to teach and preach religion today is as though Jews still continued believing in these dogmas. They resent bitterly my attempt to work out a Jewish ideology that frankly recognizes the denial of those dogmas, and that seeks to reinterpret them from a functional point of view, thereby identifying them with some of the universally accepted spiritual beliefs of our day. This resentment is perhaps in part due to an understandable resistance bred of long habituation in traditional patterns of life and thought. But it is also due, no doubt, to a feeling that with all their gains either in scholarly prestige or in administrative power they do not affect the actual thinking of most of the men who are trained in the Seminary. This is what I mean by the element of ego being mixed up with ideology. Theirs is the dog in the manger policy. Because they have nothing to give the men in the way of constructive Jewish ideas which have to do with the current problems of Jewish life, they resent my attempting to do so. Week in and week out they hear the students trying to articulate the ideas they learn in my class. I can imagine how being reminded constantly of their own failure irritates and provokes Finky and Ginzy. Throughout this last year the students who preached would tell me about their being assailed by F. for having made some statements that displeased him. Every time a student showed a tendency to make use of some phrase or concept typical of Reconstructionism I would plead with him to avoid using it because it would be like waving a red flag before a bull. This explains the malignity of F's campaign against me.

There is not the least question in my mind that he would welcome my resignation. On the other hand I cannot see how I can continue teaching at the Seminary. With Finky's increasingly watchful opposition and with his determination to combat all I represent there is really nothing left for me to do in that institution. If F. and

company succeed in purging the Seminary of me or in crippling the Reconstructionist movement, that would mean an additional nail in the coffin of Judaism.

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Saturday, June 28, 1941

Yesterday we came out here in Deal where we have rented the same house for the summer that we had last year, 110 Phillips Ave. Judith, Ira and their baby Miriam are with us.

* * *

Sunday, July 13, 1941

I had hoped that at least the summer months this year would not have the depressing effect on me that the vacations of previous years have had. The main excuse of my depressed state of mind these months is the complete shutdown of even the limited measure of Jewish activity that goes on during the seven or eight months of the academic year. I thought however that I would make so much headway with my work on "Modern Trends etc" that I would not have the sense of vacuity and borddom which usually marks my summers. But unfortunately I have stalled. The two or three attempts I made to write the first chapter have come to naught, and I have to begin all over again. I have tried to do some reading in the hope that I would both be stimulated and gather additional facts. I read through "Glueckel of Hameln" the first volume in Hebrew of Shmaryahu Levin's autobiography, "The Great Hatred," the greater part of Saloman Maimon's autobiography and the two introductions to "A Rabbinic Anthology." In addition I read Arthur Koestler's "Darkness at Noon" which gives in novel form the story of the "liquidation" of one of the foremost communist leaders and I also read an abbreviated version of "Why Sammy Runs." These books have given me plenty of food for thought but not enough guidance for action. Under "action" I include the fulfilment of the task which I must get through with if I am to have peace of mind.

At the beginning of last week I got a letter from Finkelstein telling me about the summer Institute which he was arranging with Lang of the Rabbinical Assembly, to be held at the end of August and asking me to prepare a paper on "Tradition and Change in the Interpretation of Judaism." Before I knew it I found myself making notes on that subject, because it happened to be very congenial and germane to what I had occasion to express both at the recent Seminary Faculty meeting and at the conference on "A Guide to Jewish Usage." I feel that I could write out the entire paper in two or three sittings.

* * *

Tuesday, July 15, 1941

This morning I received a letter from Finkelstein calling off the summer institute. I am glad that I can give all my time now to "Modern Trends,etc." but I am sorry that the institute was called off. Every such sign of indifference to the fate of our inner Jewish life, especially on the part of rabbis and scholars, adds to my despair of a Jewish future.

So long as one lives one is bound to act as though there were an indefinite future ahead of him. I therefore proceed with my work. It occurred to me as I was walking that it would be well to emphasize the distinction between the different trends in Judaism by means of the differences in the interpretations of the three concepts: God, Torah and Israel. Thus, according to Reform: God is the Power that reveals Himself in the moral meaning of history and in the conscience of the individual. Israel is the people chosen by that Power to make Him known. Torah is the moral law as a guide to conduct.

According to Neo-Orthodoxy:

God is the creator of the world who revealed Himself to Israel at Sinai.

Israel is the people to whom God revealed Himself; Torah is the Bible as interpreted by the Rabbis of old.

According to Reconstructionism:

God is the Power that makes for salvation (hope for the future and proppect of maximum self-fulfilment); Israel is the people which has most reason to be concerned with the problem of salvation; Torah is the normative aspect of that people's religious civilization.

* * *

Wednesday, August 12, 1941

Last summer at this time I was much happier than I am now because I was then in the midst of what seemed to me a promising exploration of a new science: soterics. This year I have little to record of all I have lived through these several weeks except a tale of woe. Physically I have been in good health except for the annoyance of having spent hours on end at the dentist's and the prospect of having another big tooth pulled. Materially my condition and that of my children has not worsened. In fact the Mushers (Sidney and Hadassah) seem to be doing well. But mentally I have nothing to boast of. I have been gasping, as it were, for a breath of hope or courage, and I feel spiritually exhausted. The trouble is that I do not know where the fault lies, whether in me or in the nature of Reality. Of course, this very dichotomy is fallacious. Who am I if not a part of Reality? Yet all thought implies dichotomy. Maybe that is why it is necessarily fallacious and why it is best not to think at all. But to refrain from thought is as impossible to me as to try to refrain from breathing.

For fear that I might let myself in for writing nonsense I shall try to analyze my present state of mind into its component factors. First, the spreading flames of war and the dread of their reaching this hemisphere and setting our country ablaze. This is the eighth week of Germany's campaign against Russia. Despite the strong resistance that Russia is putting up, she seems to stand no chance of holding

out much longer. In the meantime Petain and Dailu have virtually made France a vassal of Germany and have destroyed her parliamentary system. The hopes and the sacrifices of five generations of France's noblest sons are completely wiped out, and the will of a maniac is carried into effect! All that this means is that the millions who submit to Hitler's will share his mania for power. His unparalleled success is due to his being able to mobilize more of that mania and to time its attack against reason and good will much more effectively than any one thus far in human history. Contrast the concentration and singleness of p urpose that animate Hitler's cohorts with the vacillation and division that prevail in this country. Yesterday at the House of Representatives the resolution to extend military service by 18 months passed by one vote. The issue turned upon the question whether America was in a state of peril. The answer was 204 against 203.that we are. How convincing can such an answer be? And yet does Petain's abolition of the parliamentary system hold out the promise that human beings will be better off without majority rule? So far the most serious concern which the prospect of war has aroused in many American women is how to lay up enough silk stockings for themselves, since the government has prohibited the manufacture of silk goods.

Secondly, the state of coma which characterizes Jewish life and the accelerated disintegration of which that is symptomatic. With the growing ignorance of the traditions that formerly served as common content of Jewish consciousness, and with no sense of obligation to learn about the present and future of the Jewish people, Jews have nothing but anti-Semitism to keep them aware that they are Jews. Even in my own family I do not observe the least spontaneous desire to read about matters of Jewish interest or to discuss what to do to make Jewish life worthwhile. I have virtually never seen a Jewish book or periodical in the hands of any of my children. I am quite

sure that they have not even read my own three books. What then can I expect of others to whom Judaism was never made palatable? Apparently it is not possible for Jews to transcend the psychological law that in order to be interested in anything, it must be related to his basic needs. Since Judaism is not related in the diaspora to the basic interests of any but professional Jews, it cannot be the object of concern of any but professional Jews. The only possibility of its becoming thus related is in case, God forbid, anti-Semitism becomes the law of the land and the Jews are pushed back into the ghetto. Then of course, Jews would have to fall back on their own mental and moral resources. But so long as Jews rightly or wrongly believe they can fulfil their basic human needs through the material and cultural resources of the country, they feel no urge whatever to cultivate Jewish values. But the fact is that so long as one is identified as a Jew one should normally experience the need of coming to terms with Judaism, in the same way as everyone deems it is his duty to come to terms with whatever social heritage or citizenship he is born into. Seeing therefore how few of our people act normally in this respect, especially those in my own environment and upon whom I ought to exert some influence, I am completely disheartened. One would imagine that with Ira and myself spending together the entire summer, there would evolve the most thrilling kind of religious service for the home. Instead of which we have not had one Sabbath service this summer. And when I dared express last Saturday night my resentment at this unforgivable negligence, my folks acted as though they wanted to eat me up alive. I refer to Lena, Judith and Hadassah.

Finally, there is my own inability to cope with what I ought to do to effect some improvement in the situation which I have described above. I am handicapped by mental and moral shortcomings which incapacitate me for the kind of courageous action and effective speaking

and writing that the situation calls for. It is useless to dwell upon this deplorable fact. There is nothing I can do about it, except to try to circumvent it as well as I can.

Now that I have with much hard labor managed to write out the reasons for the miserable state of mind in which I have ~~[illegible]~~ lived these last few weeks, I shall perhaps be able to resume recording some of the ideas which occur to me from time to time about life and reality in general.

People may be divided into three types: 1) the romantic, who live in the past, idealize it and indulge themselves in nostalgic yearnings after what they imagine to have been its ~~[illegible]~~ glories; 2) the other-worldly, who center all their hopes on some remote future, who likewise idealize it and deem the postponement of all present goods for its sake the height of virtue; and 3) the secularist, who regard the satisfaction of the imperious demands of the present, yea of the immediate moment, the only thing that makes life worth living, and who for the sake of that satisfaction are ready to sacrifice all achieved values of the past and all the latent possibilities of the future. Man is either a child of habit, a victim of intelligence or a creature of impulse. The art of life consists in developing the skill whereby the past, future and present are each given their respective quotas of attention and satisfaction.

The story of "Paul's Case" by Willa Cather is a fine illustration of a creature of impulse. It is necessary, however, never to love "the elastic power of claiming the moment, mounting with it and finding it all sufficient." I should imagine that Hasidism in a sense really tried to have the Jew live to the full the past, present and future. That was its most constructive contribution to Judaism.

* * *

Thursday, August 14, 1941

I have just heard Atlee's statement from London giving the result of the conference held at sea between Pres. Roosevelt and Prime Minister Churchill. The peace aims which he read off sounded millenial. Perhaps mankind will really get the fabled honey out of the carcass of the Aryan beast. But it certainly is a great moment in the history of the world. Despite the gloom which envelops human life at the present time it is a privilege to have been present at an event the presages so definitely a better future, and out of which there has emerged a purpose worth living and fighting for. For this privilege I thank God (p. 115)

Perhaps the following analogy might throw light on the relation of God to Nature and explain why the reality of God escapes us.

GOD AS PROCESS

"The function of these distributers (traders, jobbers, retailers) is to locate the particular customer who need and want the goods sufficiently to exchange money for them, to transport the goods to them and to act in a sense as storers of goods - to hold them until such time as each ultimate customer chooses to exchange his money for them. This large field of human activity, which occupies the physical labor, thought, ingenuity and -- it should be observed -- wealth of about two-fifthas as many individuals as are engaged in production is known by some economists Distribution.

"It is a theater of human activity in which there has been, and no doubt there always will be, great 'argument about it and about.' There are not a few persons, indeed, who regard this economic service as something which should descend upon us like a blessing from on high, and cost nothing. Certainly it is no uncommon notion that this intermediary uses his strategic position, like the robber baron of old at a pass to 'exploit' either the producer or consumer,

or both. The middleman has long been regarded as an Old Man of the Sea on the back of primary producers. He is accounted essentially as an economic parasite who under hazily imagined 'ideal' conditions, would probably be eradicated from our midst.

"It is a notion which frequently gets translated, more or less consciously into political action. Perhaps the most striking exemplification of this action occurred during the first years of the Russian Revolution. The distributors of goods, the retailer and jobber, came as promptly under the economic guillotine in Russia as capitalists who owned the means of production...Complete chaos swiftly ensued, as their enterprises were progessively destroyed, until the canny Lenin inaugurated the New Economic Policy, which in reality was the old one. This policy remained in effect until the Russian State was able to improvise its own equally elaborate system for the distrubtion of goods. After which event without any question if the figures were obtainable, the full economic cost of distributing the goods to consumers which would finally be measured by the cost of supporting the total number of individuals who were engaged in the service, was probably quite as great, if not greater than before.

"Now what is the reason for this common notion that the economic service of distributing goods should be in a sense free -- or at any rate very nominal in cost...We remain unconscious of the service that has been performed in making the goods available to us when we want them, and which we should otherwise have had to perform ourselves... We are not clearly aware of what we are giving our own money for... (We imagine) we are giving our money to the middleman for the goods we obtain. Not at all. We are paying him for the goods, but we are also paying for the labor of transporting them to us and of holding them at a place where it is convenient for us at any moment to obtain them. Ordinarily, large outlays of money have been made, and after

thousands of persons have been working together in organized units, in order to perform this service. But unfortunately there is no indication on the goods themselves -- nor anywhere else available to us -- to inform us accurately as to how much actual money has been spent, how many hundreds of people have been working, and what precisely these unknown persons have been doing for our own anonymous convenience...~~XXXXX~~ It requires an effort -- indeed it calls for some real hard work of imagination -- to become properly aware of all this labor, and money laid out, on our behalf." Harry Scherman "The Promises Men Live By", 37-40.

Nature is the producer or the process of production; God is the process of distribution, whereby the objects of nature reach the consumer, man. The objects of nature constitute the datum the given or ground of reality. These objects are perceived and conceived, organized in an infinite number of ways by the process called mind which acts within individuals and among them, and which unites them into cooperative groups that achieve an identity and history of their own -- this entire invisible process renders the objects produced by nature or those which in their totality constitute nature available to man for his life growth and salvation -- all this is God.

There may be some correlation between the ability to grasp the economic process of distribution and the ability to grasp the reality of the process that makes for salvation. The communist philosophy which has a blind spot for the ~~xxx~~ former process happens also to deny the reality of the latter process. Perhaps there is also a correlation between the reputed economic ability of the Jew, an ability which presupposes sufficient power of imagination to envisage the economic process and his religious ability to conceive of God as the author of history and of the moral law, both of which are tantamount to the process of cosmic distribution which mediates between nature and man.